



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Department of Health Cautions Residents Affected by the Flood About the Risk of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning When Using Alternative Power and Heat Sources

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is cautioning residents about the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning from using alternative power and heat sources, according to L. David Glatt, section chief of the Environmental Health Section for the North Dakota Department of Health.

Some residents affected by the flood or power outages are using alternative power and heat sources such as kerosene and gasoline space heaters, gasoline generators, fireplaces and wood-burning stoves. These sources must be used with caution, however, because they are sources of carbon monoxide.

The Department of Health has received reports of residents becoming ill from carbon monoxide poisoning as a result of using alternate power sources in flooded areas. Because carbon monoxide is odorless and colorless, people often don't realize they are being exposed.

The Department of Health recommends residents take the following precautions when using alternative power and heat sources:

- Do not use gas-powered equipment or tools indoors.
- If portable generators are used, do not place them in an enclosed area such as a garage or near a window, door or fresh-air intake. Place the generator at least 50 feet from the home if possible or as far away as practical. Be careful not to place it too near a neighboring residence.
- Use proper fuel in kerosene and gasoline space heaters. Always ensure the area is well ventilated.
- Open flues when fireplaces are in use.

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

- Choose wood-burning stoves that are certified to meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency emission standards; make certain that doors on all wood-burning stoves fit tightly.
- Install a home carbon monoxide alarm.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include:

- A mild headache progressing to a throbbing headache.
- Shortness of breath.
- Irritability.
- Emotional instability.
- Impaired judgment.
- Memory loss.
- Rapid fatigue.

Symptoms can progress rapidly to coma and death. Treatment of carbon monoxide poisoning includes immediately removing the victim from the building, providing fresh air and summoning medical assistance.

A fact sheet with information about how to avoid carbon-monoxide poisoning is available on the Department of Health's website at www.ndhealth.gov/flood.

For more information, please contact Loreeta Canton or Stacy Eberl at 701.328.1312.

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